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President's Paper Carrier Delivers Atlanta Constitution

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Fred Bridgeman is not a political appointee but Jimmy Carter's rise to the presidency did get the former Arlington service station owner a new job.

He is paperboy to the President. Since about a week ago, Bridgeman has been delivering copies of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper (mornings) and the Atlanta Journal (evenings) to notable Washington addresses.

The White House is his first stop each morning after he meets the 7:38 plane from Atlanta. The President, First Lady and Vice President each get copies. So do Bert Lance, director of the Office of Management and Budget, Hamilton Jordan and other White House aides.

"With the traffic and all, I usually have Mr. Carter's paper to him 12 to 18 minutes after I take it off the plane," Bridgeman said. "I take it to the mail room."

In the era B.C. (Before Carter), only days old Atlanta papers could be found here and only at out-of-town newsstands.

Last week new vending machines containing the Atlanta papers cropped up around town amidst the ranks of the capital's Yankee press at such sites as the House office building cafeterias and at H and 18th streets-NW, just outside the Sans Souci, a celebrated lunch spot for political players and groupies.

"We fly in 100 Constitutions and

40 Journals daily," said W. H. Ragan Jr., street sales manager for the Atlanta papers, in a telephone interview yesterday.

"Out of that number, we had 34 Constitutions returned yesterday, and 14 Journals. We expect to do even better, but this is not a money-making thing. This is a prestige thing. We're proud to have a Georgian up there. There are going to be a lot more Georgians up there, and we're just trying to give them some service."

Other new Washington subscribers include the CIA, the Departments of State, Justice and Defense, the Senate and House reading rooms and press galleries.

Copies also are delivered to Attorney General Griffin Bell, the Constitution's own Washington bureau (the Cox News Service), the National Press Club library and Jack Nelson of the Los Angeles Times, Ragan said, adding, "We'll be happy to send y'all a copy, too."

It all started during inauguration week, when Ragan had a Constitution employee drive up here in a pick-up truck to spread free copies of the papers around to hotels and other popular spots for visiting Georgians.

Bridgeman, 48, father of three, and "nonpartisan" politically, was in the process of selling his Arlington service station after 20 years. An old high school buddy put him in touch with Ragan, who was looking for somebody to deliver the papers regularly.

Bridgeman operates a coin laundry on the side and, he said, the delivery job gives him time to look in on the washing machines in the middle of the day.

"I look forward to delivering Mr. Carter's paper personally, someday," he said, adding that he had not actually been inside the White House since his honeymoon 25 years ago, when he and his bride took a tour.